

Sūrah Qiyāmah

Central Theme and Relationship with the Previous Sūrah

Like the previous *sūrahs* of this group, this *sūrah* too warns the disbelievers about the Day of Judgement. The previous *sūrah* ended on the note that the real reason due to which the slaves to worldly pleasures were evading the reminders of this Day was that they had lost their innate guidance of discerning good and evil. The practice of the Almighty is that those who are alive to this guidance are blessed with further guidance, and those who become indifferent to it become so blind and deaf to the truth that no reminder is able to influence them.

In order to fully delineate this law of guidance, the Almighty has sworn by the reproaching soul found innately in every human being and has presented it to substantiate the Day of Judgement. This reproaching soul is hidden in a person and chides him on every evil that emanates from him. Its very existence in a human being is ample proof of the fact that man will not be left unaccountable and is not given any absolute powers. In other words, it is not possible that the Almighty remain unconcerned with what good or evil he may do. Man is a mini-world and the existence of the reproaching soul within him suggests that this mega-world also has a reproaching soul which is called the Judgement Day. It will manifest itself one day and reproach and chide people on their evil deeds – people who remained indifferent to their internal mechanism of reproach.

It is evident from this discussion that the greater Day of Judgement has a reflection in every human being in the form of his conscience and reproaching soul which can be termed as a lesser Day of Judgement. In other words, if a person does some evil, he does not do it in hiding; he does so at the very doors of the divine court of justice before a divine judge. Consequently, after presenting the reproaching soul as witness, the Qur'ān says: *بَلْ يُرِيدُ الْإِنْسَانُ لِيَفْجُرَ أَمَامَهُ* (in fact, man wants to be mischievous before his [conscience]). This very aspect is explained in subsequent verses by the words: *بَلْ الْإِنْسَانُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ بَصِيرَةٌ وَلَوْ أَلْقَى مَعَاذِيرَهُ* (in fact, he himself is a witness upon his own self however much he may present excuses, (75:14-15)).

Here it should be kept in consideration that the experts of modern moral

philosophy have also acknowledged certain basic virtues as virtues and certain basic vices as vices and regarded this to be a foundational principle. They have then gone on to build their theories on this principle. However, they have not been able to tell from where they have deduced these virtues to be virtues and these vices to be vices. As a result, the edifices they have built have no foundation to stand upon. Nevertheless, they accept that man has an awareness of basic virtues and basic vices. In this *sūrah*, the Qur'ān has referred to this aspect by saying that the Almighty has not only made man innately aware of good and evil, He has also blessed him with a conscience which chides him on evil deeds and praises him on good ones. And then, the Qur'ān, on the basis of this psychological reality, has substantiated the Day of Judgement and the reward and punishment that will take place on that Day. In other words, if the Almighty has devised a method for reproaching a person from within him on every evil that emanates from him and praising him on every good that ensues from him, how is it possible that He will not bring about a Day of accountability for the whole of this world and each person be rewarded and punished for his deeds?

Analysis of the Discourse

Following is an analysis of the discourse of this *sūrah*:

Verses (1-6): An oath is sworn by the Day of Judgement on the certainty of the Day. The reproaching soul in man is also presented as a proof of this Day and it is asserted that those disbelievers who are demanding to hasten the advent of this day and regard their recreation after being decayed in the dust to be an impossibility are actually going against the very testimony of their conscience. Their example is that of an audacious thief who steals right before the eyes of the judge.

Verses (7-15): A rejoinder is sounded to those who are demanding to hasten the advent of the Day of Judgement: today they are trying to deny an obvious reality and are pestering the Prophet (sws) by asking him to hasten the arrival of the Day of Judgement; however, when it will come about with a great upheaval, they will acknowledge that there is no place for them to escape to. On that Day, there will be no resting place for anyone except with God. Each person will be called upon to answer for every deed of his, and this reality is not hidden to them even though they might try their utmost to cover it up by vain talk.

Verses (16-19): The Prophet (sws) is asked to refrain from showing hurry in acquiring the Qur'ān and is asked to exercise patience; however much his opponents might show haste, he should not be influenced by them and demand the Qur'ān be revealed soon; he should calmly acquire it in the manner it is being revealed and disseminate it to his people. The Almighty

is revealing it as per His wisdom and expediency. He has taken upon Himself the responsibility of its collection and arrangement, protection and preservation, explanation and elucidation. The Prophet (sws) should not worry about any of these aspects.

Verses (20-25): The disbelievers of the Day of Judgement are rebuked and told that they have no basis for this denial. Whatever baseless excuses they are offering originate from their love of this world against the call of their own conscience. They also originate from their indifference to the Hereafter whereas it is a certain reality. On that day, many faces will be fresh expecting the blessing of their Lord, and many faces will be gloomy thinking that a back-breaking calamity is about to befall them.

Verses (26-40): No one should remain under the misconception that the Almighty will let people go scot-free. Everyone will have to face the agony of death, and in this state of helplessness will have to take the journey towards his Lord. Unfortunate is he who neither spent in the way of God nor prayed to Him; on the contrary, whenever he would be reminded of these duties, he would express utter arrogance and walk away conceitedly to his family. Everyone should remember the fact that it is not at all difficult for the Almighty to re-create man once he dies and decays for it was the Almighty Who created him from a drop of sperm and perfected him and blessed him with various abilities.

Text and Translation

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

لَا أُفْسِمُ بِيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ (١) وَلَا أُفْسِمُ بِالتَّفْهِيسِ اللَّوَامَةِ (٢) أَيْحَسِبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنْ لَنْ يَجْمَعَ عِظَامُهُ (٣) بَلَى قَادِرِينَ عَلَى أَنْ نُسَوِّيَ بَنَانَهُ (٤) بَلْ يُرِيدُ الْإِنْسَانُ لِيَفْجُرَ أَمَامَهُ (٥) يَسْأَلُ أَيَّانَ يَوْمُ الْقِيَامَةِ (٦) فَإِذَا بَرِقَ الْبَصَرُ (٧) وَخَسَفَ الْقَمَرُ (٨) وَجُمِعَ الشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ (٩) يَقُولُ الْإِنْسَانُ يَوْمَئِذٍ أَيْنَ الْمَقَرُّ (١٠) كَلَّا لَا وَزَرَ (١١) إِلَى رَبِّكَ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْمُسْتَقَرُّ (١٢) يُنَبِّأُ الْإِنْسَانُ يَوْمَئِذٍ بِمَا قَدَّمَ وَأَخَّرَ (١٣) بَلْ الْإِنْسَانُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ بَصِيرَةٌ (١٤) وَلَوْ أَلْقَى مَعَاذِيرَهُ (١٥) لَا تُحَرِّكُ بِهِ لِسَانَكَ لِتَعْجَلَ بِهِ (١٦) إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا جَمْعَهُ وَقُرْآنَهُ (١٧) فَإِذَا قَرَأَهُ فَاتَّبِعْ قُرْآنَهُ (١٨) ثُمَّ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا بَيَانَهُ (١٩) كَلَّا بَلْ تُحِبُّونَ الْعَاجِلَةَ (٢٠) وَتَذَرُونَ الْآخِرَةَ (٢١) وَجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ نَاصِرَةٌ (٢٢) إِلَى رَبِّهَا نَاطِرَةٌ (٢٣) وَوُجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ بَاسِرَةٌ (٢٤) تَظُنُّ أَنْ يُفْعَلَ بِهَا فَاقِرَةٌ (٢٥) كَلَّا إِذَا بَلَغَتِ التَّرَاقِيَ (٢٦) وَقِيلَ مَنْ رَاقٍ (٢٧) وَظَنَّ أَنَّهُ الْفِرَاقُ (٢٨) وَالْتَقَتِ السَّاقُ بِالسَّاقِ (٢٩)

إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْمَسَاقُ (٣٠) فَلَا صَدَقَ وَلَا صَلَّى (٣١) وَلَكِنْ كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّى (٣٢) ثُمَّ ذَهَبَ
إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ يَتَمَطَّى (٣٣) أَوَّلَىٰ لَكَ فَأَوَّلَىٰ (٣٤) ثُمَّ أَوَّلَىٰ لَكَ فَأَوَّلَىٰ (٣٥) أَيْحَسِبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنْ
يُتْرَكَ سُدًى (٣٦) أَلَمْ يَكْ نُطْفِئْهُ مِنْ مَّيِّ يُمْنَىٰ (٣٧) ثُمَّ كَانَ عِلْقَةً فَخَلَقَ فَسَوَّىٰ (٣٨)
فَجَعَلَ مِنْهُ الزَّوْجَيْنِ الذَّكَرَ وَالْأُنثَىٰ (٣٩) أَلَيْسَ ذَلِكَ بِقَادِرٍ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يُخْجِيَ الْمَوْتَىٰ (٤٠)

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful.

By no means! I swear by the Day of Judgement. And by no means! I swear by the reproaching soul. Does man think that We will not be able to bring together his bones? Why not? We will put him together such that We will set right even the sections of his fingers. In fact, man wants to be mischievous before his [conscience]. He asks: “When will the Day of Judgement come?” (1-6)

Thus when the sight is dazed and the moon eclipsed and the sun and the moon brought together, at that time man will say “Whither to flee?” – No! there is no refuge now! Towards your Lord that Day is the abode. On that Day, man will be informed what he sent forth and what he left behind. In fact, he himself is a witness upon his own self however much he may put up excuses. (7-15)

To swiftly learn it, do not hastily move your tongue to read it. It is Our responsibility to collect and to recite it. So when We have recited it, follow this recital. Then upon Us is to explain it. (16-19)

Certainly not! In fact, you people only love this world and are heedless of the life to come. How many a face will be bright on that Day awaiting the graciousness of their Lord and how many a face will be gloomy on that Day apprehending that there is going to befall them a back-breaking calamity. (20-25)

Certainly not! On the Day when the soul will be stuck in the collar bone and it is said: “Who is it that can weave a spell now?” and he will think that it is parting time and the shank will embrace the shank. On that Day, towards your Lord is the departure. (26-30)

Thus he neither testified nor prayed; on the contrary, he denied and turned away. Then he went away to his people conceitedly. Woe be to you! Yet again woe be to you! And again woe be to you! Yes again woe be to you! (31-35)

Does man think that he will be left to go unchecked? Was he not a mere drop of sperm poured forth? Then he became a clot of blood and then God created him and then perfected him. Then made pairs of him: male and female. Is not that God able to raise the dead to life? (36-40)

Explanation

لَا أُقْسِمُ بِيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ (١)¹

When a particle of negation occurs before an oath the way it has occurred here, it is not meant to negate the oath; it is in fact meant to refute a notion of the addressee for whose refutation the oath had been sworn in the first place. I have explained this style in various instances earlier as well. Examples of such a style not only abound in Arabic, it exists in most other languages as well. When we want to immediately refute a notion of someone, we say: “No! By God! The truth of the matter is such and such.” What is conveyed by such a style is that so baseless is the notion of the addressee that the speaker is not even willing to wait so much as to negate it after the oath; he refutes it and in fact finds it necessary to express his disgust before the oath. Some people have regarded the particle of negation as superfluous and some regard it to directly relate to the verb it precedes. However, as per linguistic principles of Arabic, both these views are not correct. I have refuted them at various places in this *tafsīr*. My mentor, Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī, has also discussed this issue at length in his *tafsīr*. Those who want to see the details are advised to look it up.

Here the complement of oath (*muqṣam ‘alayh*) is not mentioned for two reasons:

Firstly, it is so evident that there is no need to express it in words. In other words, the oath itself bears evidence to its complement. The sun is a witness on itself as they say. Many examples of such suppression can be seen in preceding *sūrahs*. For example, in Sūrah Qāf and in Sūrah Ṣu‘ād, the oaths of *وَالْقُرْآنِ الْمَجِيدِ* and *وَالْقُرْآنِ ذِي الذِّكْرِ* occur without their complements. The purpose of such oaths is to inform the addressee that what is being refuted by him is itself so obvious a testimony to its truth and veracity that there exists no possibility to deny it.

Secondly, the oath sworn by the reproaching soul mentioned subsequently is such a self-obvious testimony on the Day of Judgment that refuting it, as will be explained later, is tantamount to refuting one’s own conscience. In the presence of such a testimony, no further evidence is required for the Day of Judgement. In such cases, the premise which is to be substantiated and the testimony which substantiates it assume the status of the oath and the complement of oath respectively.

1. By no means! I swear by the Day of Judgement.

وَلَا أَقْسِمُ بِالنَّفْسِ اللَّوَّامَةِ (٢)²

This is the second oath. Its complement (*muqdam 'alayh*) is also not mentioned in words. The reason is that this complement is hidden within the oath. Thus what is implied is that the existence of the reproaching soul within man is evidence enough for the Day of Judgement. In other words, this second oath delineates both the oath and its complement, and points to the fact that no external evidence is required for this Day. Its reflection is found within man and he is able to see it too even though he may put forth various reasons to refute it.

The reproaching soul is not an independent entity; it is part of the human soul. The Almighty has fashioned the human soul such that He has blessed it with an awareness of good and evil. He has also prescribed a principle for the success and failure of a person: he who cleanses his soul of evil will succeed and he who contaminates his soul with evil will be doomed. In Sūrah Shams, the words are:

وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا (٩١: ٧-١٠)

And the soul bears witness and the perfection given to it, then [God] inspired it with its evil and its good that he succeeded who purified it and he failed who soiled it. (91:7-10)

Because of being composed thus, at times, the human soul loses its balance by being overcome with its desires and induces a person to do evil. This proclivity of the soul is called the Enticing Soul (*nafs-i ammārah*) by the Qur'ān. The Prophet Joseph (sws) has referred to this aspect of the soul thus:

وَمَا أُبَرِّئُ نَفْسِي إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ (١٢: ٥٣)

I do not claim my soul to be free from sin: the soul is very prone to evil. (12:53)

However, this soul also possesses an awareness of virtue; hence as long as it is able to maintain balance, it even reproaches its own self if some vice emanates from it; at the same time, it also feels disgust and revulsion if some other person indulges in vice and reproaches it. It is this very aspect of the soul which is called the reproaching soul here.

The strategy which a person should adopt in maintaining the balance of

2. And by no means! I swear by the reproaching soul.

his soul is that he should keep his Lord and the Day of Judgement in his remembrance. This remembrance checks the soul and never lets the soul totally submit to its desires. If a person errs, the reproaching soul at once checks him, and makes him realize his folly; the person then turns to God in repentance and tries to make amends. The soul which is able to achieve this balance is called the Satisfied Soul (*naḥṣ-i muṭma'innah*). This is the highest position a person can reach in training and disciplining his soul. The Almighty has urged him to try to attain this position and blessed mankind with His divine law so that it can attain this position by adhering to it. Such a soul will be blessed with a unique gift in the Hereafter: The Almighty shall be pleased with it and it shall be pleased with the Almighty.

It is evident from this explanation that the awareness of vice being vice is innately found in man from the very moment he was created. Adam's son Cain while being overcome with jealousy killed Abel; however, after this murder, he tried to hide his corpse. This effort obviously was undertaken by him because he realized his sin. The most evil of men commits a sin not because he regards it to be a virtuous act, but because he is overwhelmed with desires and emotions. If he goes against his conscience in this matter, he does so against his natural inclinations. The proof of this is that if someone else commits the same sin against him he regards it to be a vice and protests against it. If one examines the conscience of wicked people, one will see that they too respect virtuous acts even though they do not do such acts. Ever since man started to live as a collectivity he has always set up a system of justice in it. Even though, at times, certain sins engulf a whole society and dominate virtue, the collective conscience of the society never condones this. In fact, there always exist people in such a society who carry out the same responsibility in it as is carried out by the reproaching soul found within every upright person. When the situation reaches the extent that a society becomes totally bereft of virtue, then as per the law of providence, such a society is wiped out from the face of the earth.

Now the question is that if a person has a guardian within his conscience which chides him on every evil that emanates from him, then how can it be imagined that man will not be held accountable for his deeds. Why would he go scot-free if he spends a life in whatever manner he wants to while negating the calls of his conscience? If a person will not be held accountable for his deeds, then where has this chiding conscience come into him from? If his Creator is unconcerned about the good and evil which emanates from him, then why and from where has He given him the feeling of being elated at a good deed and being pricked by his conscience at a bad one? Then from here another question

arises: If God has set up a miniature court of justice in every person, then why will He not set up a greater court of justice which will hold the whole world accountable for good and evil which emanate from it and not reward and punish people accordingly? Any person who deliberates on these questions while disregarding his desires will reach the conclusion that the very being of a person bears witness that he has innate knowledge of good and evil; he will not be left unaccountable; there definitely shall come one day when he will be punished for any misdeeds he may have done and be rewarded for his good deeds. To remind a person of this Day, the Almighty has placed a miniature court of justice within a person's soul so that man does not remain indifferent to it, and if ever he becomes indifferent he can catch a glimpse of it by merely reflecting on his inner-self. It is this reality which sages have taught us by saying that man is a miniature world and within this miniature world there is a reflection of the greater world. If a person has a true comprehension of his own self, he is able to comprehend both God and the Hereafter. The famous Socrates adage says: "Know Thyself".

أَيَحْسَبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَلَّنْ نَجْمَعُ عِظَامَهُ (٣) بَلَى قَادِرِينَ عَلَى أَنْ نُسَوِّيَ بَنَانَهُ (٤)³

Although the general word "man" is used in these verses, the address is directed to the disbelievers of the Day of Judgement among the Quraysh whose doubts raised about this day have been discussed in the previous *sūrahs*. This general style of address is adopted to express disgust at their attitude. These verses assert that the evidence on the Day of Judgement is found within man; one does not have to look in the external world. However, these people are of the view that after dying and being decayed in dust the Almighty will not be able to bring together their bones. It is asserted in this verse that if this looks impossible to them and on its basis they deny the Day of Judgement even though their conscience bears witness to it, then they should remember that not only will the Almighty gather their bones, He will gather them with such power and perfection that even the sections of their fingers will be put together. The word بَنَانٌ means each of "the sections of a finger". The implication is that the Almighty will be able to join together even the minutest of joints.

The word قَادِرِينَ is an accusative of state (*hāl*) from the plural pronoun in نَجْمَعُ.

3. Does man think that We will not be able to bring together his bones? Why not? We will put him together such that We will set right even the sections of his fingers.

بَلْ يُرِيدُ الْإِنْسَانُ لِيَفْجُرَ أَمَامَهُ⁴

The implication of this verse is that it is mere vain talk on the part of the disbelievers to deny the Day of Judgement because they think that gathering bones is improbable. The reality is that they have become slaves to their desires: while following them they want to be mischievous before the judge appointed by the Almighty. This judge is not far away; he is sitting within them. Their example is that of a thief who wants to steal in front of a judge.

Exegetes have generally taken the word أَمَامَهُ (in front of him) to mean that man in his future life wants to continue to adhere to sin. For this reason, he tries to invent excuses for denying the Day of Judgement. However, if this interpretation is accepted, it does not relate to the reproaching soul and nor does it become an irrefutable argument against his attitude. Here the word “in front of” means before his conscience and reproaching soul he wants to be mischievous in spite of reminders from this faculty. The greatest evidence of the Day of Judgement is found within man; however, what can one do about a person who becomes adamant in denying his own self?

The argument found in this verse is that a man’s conscience is enough to bear evidence of the Day of Judgement; however, one cannot shut the mouth of a person who is audacious enough to tell a lie before his own conscience.

It also follows from this that a person who commits a vice against his reproaching soul or in other words his own conscience is one who actually commits vice in the presence of God. This is because one’s conscience is a judge appointed by God, as indicated above. Thus, a vice committed before it is a vice committed before God.

يَسْأَلُ أَيَّانَ يَوْمُ الْقِيَامَةِ⁵

This is a mention of the stubbornness of those who disbelieved in the Day of Judgement. In spite of the fact that an accountability court is found within them and they are also aware of it, they ask about the advent of that Day. They would sarcastically remark: “If it is to come why is it not coming? We are tired of being threatened about it. It was in fact never supposed to come and neither will it come in the future. So why should we be overawed by these threats. Those who are claiming that it will come one day must bring it and show it to us. Only then will

4. In fact man wants to be mischievous before his [conscience].

5. He asks: “When will the Day of Judgement come?”

we believe it. Mere verbal claims will not convince us.”

فَإِذَا بَرِقَ الْبَصَرُ (٧) وَخَسَفَ الْقَمَرُ (٨) وَجُمِعَ الشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ (٩) يَقُولُ الْإِنْسَانُ يَوْمَئِذٍ
أَيْنَ الْمَقَرُّ (١٠)⁶

The implication of these verses is that today these disbelievers are showing impatience at the delay in the Day of Judgement as if they are fully ready to encounter it. But where will they run to when they actually face its horrors?

Since the demand of being shown the Day of Judgement is an absolutely absurd demand, no reply is given by the Qur’ān to it. However, some horrific aspects of that Day are portrayed by it in these verses.

The state of affairs portrayed belongs to the category of the *mutashābihāt*. We cannot grasp their true form in this world. The purpose of this portrayal is to show that such will be the upheaval that will ensue on that Day that the sun and the moon will leave their own orbits and adopt the same path. Who can comprehend the horrific nature of this? The implication is that if people even have a semblance of intellect in them, they should seek refuge from these horrors and adhere to the path which is being shown to them and which will save them from these horrors. Thus they should stop showing impatience on its delay.

It should remain clear that the incidents which will happen on that Day mentioned here merely give a slight picture of what will happen, and are only a handful of what else will happen when the Day comes. In the coming *sūrahs* of this group, various other aspects of the Day will be depicted. These too will only be a few, for the tongue is unable to portray all of them.

كَلَّا لَا وَزَرَ (١١) إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْمُسْتَقَرُّ (١٢)⁷

This is the answer to the question quoted in the previous verse: “Whither to flee?” Except for seeking refuge with God all other paths and ways will be closed to them.

يُنَبِّئُ الْإِنْسَانُ يَوْمَئِذٍ بِمَا قَدَّمَ وَأَخَّرَ (١٣)⁸

Mentioned in this verse is the real reason for the advent of the Day of

6. Thus when the sight is dazed and the moon eclipsed and the sun and the moon brought together, at that time man will say “Whither to flee?”

7. – No! there is no refuge now! Towards your Lord that Day is the abode.

8. On that Day, man will be informed what he sent forth and what he left behind.

Judgement. Being informed here means being shown the consequences of the deeds. The results of both the vices a person committed in the previous world and the virtues he failed to attain will become apparent to him. At many places in the Qur'ān, it is specifically mentioned that on the Day of Judgement those who remained indifferent to it will express extreme frustration. They will express regret for not having done good deeds in the previous world and not having followed the warnings of the Messengers of God and not professing faith in them. The words قَدَّمَ and أَخَّرَ embrace all the evil deeds and vices committed by such people.

It should be kept in mind that to achieve success in the Hereafter, a person has to do many good deeds and evade evil ones. However, those who are indifferent to the Hereafter or deny it either are indifferent to or deviate from deeds which pave the way for their success in the Hereafter. On the other hand, all their life they keep committing deeds which will lead them to doom in the Hereafter. This verse sounds a warning to such deprived and bereft people.

بَلِّ الْإِنْسَانُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ بَصِيرَةً^٩ (١٤) وَلَوْ أَلْقَى مَعَاذِيرَهُ (١٥)^٩

These verses explain what is mentioned earlier by the words: بَلِّ يُرِيدُ الْإِنْسَانُ لِيَفْجُرَ أَمَامَهُ (in fact, man wants to be mischievous before his [conscience]). There, the discourse with relation to the question posed by the opponents: يَسْأَلُ أَيَّانَ يَوْمُ الْقِيَامَةِ (when will the Day of Judgement come?) had shifted to the portrayal of the Day of Judgement. Now in this verse the discourse returns to its original course and the subject under discussion is completed. The expression بَصِيرَةً عَلَى نَفْسِهِ means شَاهِدٌ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ (he is a witness upon his own self). The reason for this has already been mentioned earlier: the reproaching soul within man bears witness to the Hereafter. There is no need to go far to find a testimony to this Day. He can see its reflection within his own conscience.

The word مَعَاذِيرُ is a plural of مَعَذَرَةٌ. It is actually مَعَاذِرُ. A ي has been added in it just as it has been added in مَنَاقِبُ. It means false pretexts and baseless excuses. There is an Arabic proverb: الْمَعَاذِرُ مَكَاذِبُ (excuses are but lies). Some people think that it is a plural of مِعْدَار which in the Yemenite tongue means “a curtain”. I disagree with this view because the Qur'ān has been revealed in the idiomatic language of the Quraysh and not that of the people of Yemen.

9. In fact, he himself is a witness upon his own self however much he may put up excuses.

لَا تُحَرِّكْ بِهِ لِسَانَكَ لِتَعْجَلَ بِهِ (١٦) إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا جَمْعَهُ وَقُرْآنَهُ (١٧) فَإِذَا قَرَأَهُ فَاتَّبِعْ قُرْآنَهُ (١٨) ثُمَّ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا بَيَانَهُ¹⁰

These verses urge the Prophet (sws) to be patient on the hastiness and various new demands of his opponents. It was with the sole support of divine revelation through which the Prophet (sws) was able to truly discharge the heavy responsibility of openly warning his people imposed on him by the Almighty. He was like a soldier, fighting at a battle front, who could not move even one step without guidance from his Lord. In order to torment him, his opponents would raise all sorts of demands and objections before him. In this manner, they would try their utmost to check his advance in his preaching mission. Earlier in this *sūrah*, one of their demands is cited: they would ask the Prophet (sws) to bring forth the Day of Judgement which he was threatening them with; if it was certain to come, why was it not arriving? Similarly, they would object that if the Qur'ān is God's word, why was it not revealed all at once? In short, they would shower objections from all sides, and the Prophet (sws), on the other hand, would wait for divine revelation to answer all these objections. It was through divine revelation that that his heart would receive strength, his soul would be rejuvenated, his intellect guided and his determination strengthened. Consequently, it is evident both from the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth that whenever there was a delay in the advent of revelation because of some divine wisdom, he would keep looking up to the heavens. This impatience and keenness would also be evident when Gabriel would deliver the revelation to him. Like an enthusiastic student he would want to learn all the revelation as soon as possible and also preserve it fully lest even a drop of this blessed rain go waste. With this background in mind, let us now deliberate on these verses.

By the words لَا تُحَرِّكْ بِهِ لِسَانَكَ لِتَعْجَلَ بِهِ the Prophet (sws) has been stopped from showing hastiness and impatience which would overcome him whenever a revelation would descend upon him. Although the subject of keenness and hastiness is very commonly found in the literature of most languages, it is almost impossible to express in words the hastiness and impatience with which the Prophet (sws) would be overcome when he would receive a revelation after a long gap and in the face of his opponents idle talk. When a child is hungry and his mother presses him to

10. To swiftly learn it, do not hastily move your tongue to read it. It is Our responsibility to collect and to recite it. So when We have recited it, follow this recital. Then upon Us is to explain it.

her bosom, he wants to drink all the milk in a single breath; when a traveller exhausted from traversing a desert sees a bucket full of water after a long wait, he wants to gulp all of it in one sip; similarly, if a person, suffering from the pangs of being away from his beloved, receives a letter from her, he would want to read each and every word of it in a single glance. Although these examples are deficient, yet as indicated earlier, they can give us some idea of the hastiness and anxiety so spontaneously expressed by the Prophet (sws) whenever he would be blessed with divine revelation.

The reasons for this impatience were many, as referred to before. Thus, for example:

- All the strategy that needed to be adopted by him in the capacity of God's Messenger could only be known through divine revelation.
- His spiritual, moral and intellectual needs could only be fulfilled through it.
- He would receive from it the guidance needed to face the existing and future circumstances.
- It was through it that he would be able to answer the objections and demands which his adversaries would keep posing to him every now and then.
- His great love for knowledge and his sensitivity in preserving it also contributed very much to it.

All these motives were very genuine and noble; however, it was God's wisdom that the Qur'ān be revealed gradually – just as it was being done. Consequently, the Prophet (sws) was repeatedly urged to exercise patience. In Sūrah Tāhā (114-115) too he has been similarly urged. I have already referred to some aspects of this there. Here too the subject primarily is the same. However, with respect to his mental state during the time of revelation of this *sūrah*, here he has been subsequently assured of the preservation of the Qur'ān also. The Almighty has taken it upon Himself to collect and arrange it and to recite it before the Prophet (sws) and make him memorize it as well as to explain any verse of the Qur'ān which needs elaboration. The Prophet (sws) was told to be content on whatever portion of the Qur'ān he would receive and not show hastiness and anxiety about it. He should also not worry about its preservation. He should leave all these to his Lord. Every task would be completed at its appointed time in accordance with the wisdom of God.

The words **إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا جَمْعَهُ وَقُرْآنَهُ** sound an assurance to the Prophet (sws) on his anxiety referred to earlier. Since a great divine treasure was being

entrusted to him, it was but natural for him to preserve each and every word that was being given in his custody. The Almighty has assured him that the responsibility of preserving and reciting it is His responsibility.

The word **حَمَّعَ** is a comprehensive one: it means preservation in the heart of the Prophet (sws) and also bringing together all the parts of the Qur'ān. Consequently, the Prophet (sws) would continuously receive guidance regarding the placement of the revealed verses in various *sūrahs*. As a result, he would direct the collectors to insert these verses at their specific places. They, of course, obeyed these instructions diligently.

A further arrangement that was made by the Almighty was that in each Ramaḍān, the Prophet (sws) would read out the Qur'ān revealed till that time to Gabriel in order to safeguard any loss from memory. It is evident from various narratives that in the last Ramaḍān of the Prophet (sws) this reading took place twice. The word **فُرِئَ لَهُ** points to this reading.

The verse **فَإِذَا قَرَأَهُ فَاتَّبِعْ قُرْآنَهُ** implies that the Prophet (sws) should not ask that the Qur'ān be quickly revealed to him. He should leave the matter to God, Who would reveal it in a specific amount as per His wisdom. He will also arrange to preserve and collect and arrange it. The Prophet's responsibility is to only follow the recital of what has been read out to him of the Qur'ān. He should read it, act on it and call people towards it. Also, he should pay no heed to the demand of people who are asking for its revelation in one go.

A further assurance is sounded to the Prophet (sws) in the verse **ثُمَّ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا بَيَانَهُ**. If explanation is required of any part of the Qur'ān, it is the responsibility of the Almighty to furnish it. The Prophet (sws) need not fret about this. It will be done when the time comes. This is a reference to the *tabyīn* verses which were revealed to explain and elucidate a previously revealed directive or to abrogate or to complete it. I have referred to these elucidatory verses at a number of places in this *tafsīr*. The words **كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ** generally occur after them. They actually are the fulfilment of the promise mentioned in **ثُمَّ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا بَيَانَهُ**.

I will now present excerpts from the *tafsīr* of my mentor Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī which he has written while explaining these verses. He writes:¹¹

The exegetes think that the cause of the haste mentioned in these verses is that the Prophet (sws) would be anxious about losing any part of the Qur'ān. I do not differ with this view; however, there are some

11. Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī, *Majmū'ah Tafāsīr*, 2nd ed. (Lahore: Faran Foundation, 1998), 211-212.

more details in this which need to be understood.

When the Prophet (sws) would receive divine guidance, he would think that he was being given a great responsibility and that he was being entrusted with a great thing; the slightest of blemish or loss of even a single letter would hold him accountable before God. Simultaneously, he wished to receive more and more divine revelation for any part of it might be instrumental in giving guidance to his people. Both these aspects are very evident regarding this matter. Consequently, the assurance sounded to him in this *sūrah* takes into consideration both these aspects.

The preservation of the Qur'ān has been promised by the Almighty both in a concise and comprehensive manner. Thus, for example, it is said:

وَإِنَّهُ لَكِتَابٌ عَزِيزٌ لَا يَأْتِيهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِ تَنْزِيلٌ مِّنْ حَكِيمٍ
حَمِيدٍ (٤١: ٤١-٤٢)

And this is a mighty scripture. Falsehood cannot reach it neither from in front of it nor from behind it. It is a revelation from a wise and glorious God. (41:41-42)

At another place, the words are:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ (٩: ١٥)

It was We that revealed the Reminder, and We shall Ourselves preserve it. (15:9)

It is evident from these verses that there is no possibility of any addition or deletion in the Qur'ān. Consequently, there exists a consensus in the whole of this *ummah* that the Qur'ān has remained preserved. The popular view attributed to the Imāmiyyah sect that a part of the Qur'ān has been made to disappear is totally against the opinion of their authorities. Sayyid Murtadā, Muḥammad Ibn Ḥasan al-Tūsī (popularly known as the Sheikh al-Tāi'fah), Abū 'Alī Ṭabarī, Ṭabrisī (the author of *Majma' al-bayān*), Muḥammad Ibn 'Alī ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī – all have vehemently denied this absurd view. Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī says: “It is our belief that the very Qur'ān revealed to the Prophet by the Almighty is the one which is found between two covers in the Muslim *ummah*. There is not a single letter of the Qur'ān more than this. A person who attributes to

us the view that we believe the Qur'ān consisted of more is a liar.” Regarding the narratives which are found in their literature in this matter, Sayyid Murtaḍā says that those among the Imāmiyyah and the Ḥashawiyyah sects who differ with this view are of no significance because their view is based on some weak Aḥādīth that they regard to be authentic. However, on the basis of such weak Aḥādīth, a proven and a certain reality cannot be rejected.

Farāhī subsequently goes on to state the conclusions he has drawn from the above quoted verses of Sūrah Qiyāmah:¹²

First, the Qur'ān was collected and arranged in the lifetime of the Prophet (sws) and recited to him in a specific sequence. If this promise was to be fulfilled after his death, he would not have been asked to follow this new recital [referred to by the words: “So when We have recited it out, follow this recital”].

Second, the Prophet (sws) was directed to read the arranged Qur'ān in its new sequence ... this directive means that the Prophet (sws) must have communicated the final arrangement of the Qur'ān the way it was finally recited to him. And this arrangement must have been the same as the one found in the guarded tablet (the *lawḥ-i mahfūz*). This is because the final recital had to match the original recital [found in the tablet].

Third, after this collection and arrangement, the Almighty explained whatever He intended to from among specifying a general directive or vice versa, furnishing supplementary directives and reducing the scope of some directives.

Farāhī further states:¹³

All these conclusions are evident from the Qur'ān and also corroborated by Ḥadīth literature. Consequently, the Prophet (sws) would read out whole *sūrahs* of the Qur'ān to people and this could not have been possible unless they had been read out to him in their specific sequences. The Companions (rta) would listen to and preserve the Qur'ān in accordance with this arrangement and abide by it. It is known that the Prophet (sws) would direct the Companions (rta) to place the revealed verses of the Qur'ān at specific places of specific

12. Ibid., 212-213.

13. Ibid., 213.

sūrahs and the Companions (rta) would obey this directive. Then when some explanatory verse would be revealed, the Prophet (sws) would have it written at either the place immediately following the verses which needed this explanation or at the end of the *sūrah* in case these verses related to the whole theme of the *sūrah*.

Deliberation reveals another distinct feature of these explanatory verses: they themselves contained words which would show that these verses have in fact been revealed as explanation. They would generally be of the wording: كَذَٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ آيَاتِهِ لِلنَّاسِ (thus does the Almighty explain His verses for people ...)

Similarly, it is known from authentic and agreed upon narratives that once the whole of the Qur'ān had been revealed, Gabriel recited the complete Qur'ān to the Prophet (sws) in its real sequence. This clears many doubts about the sequence and arrangement of the Qur'ān.

كَلَّا بَلْ تُحِبُّونَ الْعَاجِلَةَ (٢٠) وَتَذَرُونَ الْآخِرَةَ (٢١)¹⁴

After urging the Prophet (sws) to show patience on the piecemeal revelation of the Qur'ān, the discourse returns to its original sequence. The disbelievers are addressed and told that their attitude about the Day of Judgement is not because they do not have any argument in its support; its greatest argument is found in their own conscience. The real reason for this attitude of denial is that they are infatuated with this world and its luxuries, and do not have the patience and grit to leave its immediate pleasures for the deferred pleasures of the Hereafter.

The words وَتَذَرُونَ الْآخِرَةَ mean “you are showing indifference to the Hereafter”. The implication is that the Hereafter is not hidden from them; since the pleasures of this world are at hand and those of the Hereafter are not, they are intentionally showing indifference to the Hereafter.

وَجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ نَّاضِرَةٌ (٢٢) إِلَىٰ رَبِّهَا نَاطِرَةٌ (٢٣) وَوُجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ بَاسِرَةٌ (٢٤) تَظُنُّ أَنْ يُفْعَلَ بِهَا فَاقِرَةٌ (٢٥)¹⁵

The implication of these verses is that if for the sake of this world they are showing indifference to the Hereafter they should do so; but they

14. Certainly not! In fact you people only love this world and are heedless of the life to come.

15. How many a face will be bright on that Day awaiting the graciousness of their Lord and how many a face will be gloomy on that Day apprehending that there is going to befall them a back-breaking calamity.

should remember that the reality they are disregarding is certain to come, and on that Day the situation will be totally different. The faces of those who spent their life in its awareness will be fresh and bright. They will await the blessings and mercy of God. On the other hand, the faces of those who led their lives while being indifferent to it will be bleak and gloomy and they will apprehend a calamity which will break their backs.

Portrayed in these verses is actually the situation that will arise before people enter Paradise or Hell. When those worthy of Paradise will see that at every step angels are welcoming them with words of peace and reverence, their faces will turn bright in anticipation of the bright future which awaits them. They will be hopeful that the time is arriving when they will be the recipients of God's promised mercy in its ultimate form. On the contrary, the situation faced by the disbelievers at each step will make their faces glum and gloomy: they will anticipate the back-breaking punishment promised to them and to which they had paid no heed in the previous world.

The words *إِلَى رَبِّهَا نَاظِرَةٌ* mean that these people will await the blessings and favours of their Lord. When the preposition *إِلَى* is used with *نَظَرَ* just as it means to look at something, it also means to await someone's blessings and favours. Lexicographers explain this thus: if someone says *إِنَّمَا نَنْظُرُ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ إِلَيْكَ* to someone from whom he is expecting blessings and favours, it would mean: "I await God's blessings and after them your favours".¹⁶

The context also supports this interpretation. The mental state of those who will be going to Hell is depicted thus: *تَنْظُرُ أَنْ يُفْعَلَ بِهَا فَاقِرَةٌ* (apprehending that there is going to befall them that which breaks their backs). Because of this apprehension, their faces will be gloomy and apprehensive. In contrast, the believers are described as those who will expect and await the manifestation of their Lord's greatest mercy and as a result their faces will be joyous and cheerful.

The expression *أَنْ يُفْعَلَ بِهَا فَاقِرَةٌ* is grammatically analyzed by Zamakhsharī thus:¹⁷ *أي يفعل بها فعل هو في شدته و فطاعته فاقرة* (they will be meted out such punishment of which the intensity will break their backs). Although other grammatical analyses are also possible, I would prefer this. Examples of this will be seen in the succeeding *sūrahs*.

16. Sa'īd al-Khūrī Shartūnī, *Aqrab al-mawārid fī fuṣaḥi al-'arabiyyah wa al-shawārid*, 1st ed., vol. 5 (Tehrān: Dār al-uswah, 1416 AH), 432.

17. Abū al-Qāsim Muḥammad ibn 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf 'an ḥaqā'iq al-tanzīl wa 'uyūn al-aqāwīl fī wujūh al-ta'wīl*, vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār ihyā' al-turāth al-'arabī, n.d.), 664.

The word فَاقْرَءْ refers to a calamity which shatters the bones of the spinal chord.

Some people derive man's observation of God by the verse إِلَىٰ رَبِّهَا نَاطِرَةٌ. In my opinion, this verse does not refer to this if its context and occasion are understood. It is, in fact, a verse with an entirely different context and occasion. Similarly, those who oppose man's observation of God and in frenzy of this opposition alter the meaning of the preposition إِلَىٰ have erred in their interpretation. My view on this issue is that our belief in God in this world is not based on observation of Him. We believe in Him because certain signs and indications strongly point to His existence; however, in the Hereafter our belief in Him will be based on direct observation, and we will be able to directly witness every reality we profess faith in. As far as the nature of this observation is concerned, we cannot determine it in this world. It is from the category of *mutashābihāt* and one is not allowed to delve into the *mutashābihāt*. Only God, the Almighty knows the nature of this observation.

كَلَّا إِذَا بَلَغَتِ النَّرَاقِي (٢٦) وَقِيلَ مَنْ رَاقٍ (٢٧) وَظَنَّ أَنَّهُ الْفِرَاقُ (٢٨) وَالتَّقَتِ السَّاقُ
بِالسَّاقِ (٢٩) إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْمَسَاقُ (٣٠)¹⁸

Those who are slaves to worldly pleasures are reminded of the agonies of death and of the state of helplessness a person will be in at that time. They should not regard the Day of Judgement to be improbable. It shall definitely come and they will have to take the long journey back to their Lord. Their vigour and enthusiasm will end; so helpless will they be that the shank will embrace the shank. It is in their own interest to prepare for this journey and turn towards the Almighty before this happens and before their souls are stuck in the collar bone.

Whatever my mentor, Imām Farāhī, has written while explaining these verses is based on sound research. In the following paragraphs, I will summarize in his own words what he has written in his *tafsīr*. He writes:¹⁹

The pronoun found in the phrase بَلَغَتِ النَّرَاقِي is for the soul which is not mentioned here. An example of such a suppression also occurs in the following verse of Sūrah Wāqī'ah: (٨٣:٥٦) فَلَوْلَا إِذَا بَلَغَتِ الْخُلُوفَ (when

18. Certainly not! On the Day when the soul will be stuck in the collar bone and it is said: "Who is it that can weave a spell now?" and he will think that it is parting time and the shank will embrace the shank. On that Day, towards your Lord is the departure.

19. Ibid., 215-218.

under your very eyes a man's soul reaches the throat, (56:83)). Such a suppression is customary in Arabic. Hence it was not necessary to mention the antecedent of the pronoun. Examples of such a suppression are also found in classical Arabic.

Hātim Ṭā'ī says:

أماوي ما يغني الثراء عن الفتى
إذا حشرجت يوما وضاق بها الصدر

(O Māwīyah! What use will wealth be to a person when the soul will be trapped in the chest.)²⁰

In the above quoted couplet, the *nomen agentis* (*fā'il*) of the verb is the soul but has been suppressed as per the linguistic principle alluded to earlier. Examples of such a suppression are also found in the Qur'ān. In Sūrah Faṭir, it is said: (مَا تَرَكَ عَلَى ظَهْرِهَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ (35:45)) (not one creature would be left alive on the earth's surface, (35:45)). Here one can see that the antecedent of the pronoun *هَا* which is "the earth" has been suppressed ... The sentence *وَقِيلَ مَنْ رَاقٍ* (and it is said: "Who is it that can weave a spell now?") expresses the severity and sensitivity of the situation. The passive tense *قِيلَ* has great eloquence in it. In other words, such will be the severity of the situation that no one will be able to pay attention to the person who will speak these words. To put it another way, the importance of these words will make people totally indifferent to their speaker. Everyone will be rehearsing these words. When the word *مَنْ* comes before an undefined noun, it implies severity in demand or great despair. Ṭarfah says:

إذا القوم قالوا من فتى خلت أنني
عنيت فلم أكسل ولم أتبدل

(When the nation calls out: "Is there a young man?" I understand that they are referring to me; then I do not display laziness and weakness.)²¹

... let us now see what the intentionality of the verse is and the purpose for which this style has been adopted here. In my opinion, the verse can be interpreted in two ways and there is in reality no difference

20. Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'arab*, vol. 13, 333.

21. Ṭarfah ibn al-'Abd, *Dīwān*, vol. 1, 5.

between these two interpretations.

The first interpretation is that when a person will be close to death and will be in an unconscious state, the attendants will worriedly call out: “Is there some conjurer who can cure this dying person?”

The second interpretation is that the attendants will say: “The matter is now finished; who can cure this dying man?” This of course is an expression of hopelessness and when the sick person will hear it, he will become sure that the time for his departure has arrived. The following couplet by Khansā portrays this situation:

لكن سهام المنايا من يصين له
لم يشفه طب ذي طب ولا راق

(He who is stung by the arrows of death cannot be cured by the competence of a doctor nor the conjuring of a conjurer.)²²

Both these interpretations of the verse are possible and I have presented both of them for [the analysis of the readers]. They can adopt anyone of them. However, in my opinion, the second of these interpretations is closer to the context.

While explaining the expression *والتفت الساق بالساق*, Farāhī writes:

The meaning of the shank embracing the shank is that a person will not be able to walk. This will be because of intense weakness and helplessness. As long as a person is alive, he is vigorously active in all spheres of his life; however, when he dies, it seems that his shanks have mutually embraced themselves.

... “the shank embracing the shank” is a very apt expression of frailty and helplessness. The purport of the verse is: what will happen when a doctor loses hope in the sick person, relatives withdraw in frustration, the once obedient limbs are no longer under control and he has to go to his Lord with a heavy burden?

Some people have interpreted the word *ساق* to mean “severity of the situation”. However, this view is of those people who have no knowledge of the Arabic language. These people do not understand the difference between the whole and the part. No doubt, the words

22. Abū al-Farj al-Aṣḥbahānī, *Āghānī*, vol. 16, 71.

كشف عن الساق when taken as a single expression is commonly used in Arabic to connote “vigour, liveliness and eagerness”. However, when these words are used separately, then the word كشف means “to unveil” and الساق means “the shank”. It is not that when used separately, then too they will connote the same meaning as they carry when used together in this expression.

A narrative ascribed to Ibn ‘Abbās (rta) says that الساق means the last day of this world and the first day of the next. I think the narrators have not faithfully transmitted what he might have said. If the ascription is correct, it could be a reference to the situation which would arise at that time and not a delineation of the meaning of this word.

Once the correct meaning of the shank embracing the shank is understood, the occasion and context of the next sentence: إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْمَسَاقُ (on that Day, towards your Lord is the departure) can be grasped automatically. It is as if man is scolded for his indifference in preparing for this journey; he remained busy acquiring worldly pleasures and luxuries and reached a stage when in this pursuit he lost all his strength and energy; how will he now be able to reach his Lord in such a state?

فَلَا صَدَقَ وَلَا صَلَّى (٣١) وَلَكِنْ كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّى (٣٢) ثُمَّ ذَهَبَ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ يَتَمَطَّى (٣٣)
أُولَىٰ لَكَ فَأُولَىٰ (٣٤) ثُمَّ أُولَىٰ لَكَ فَأُولَىٰ (٣٥)²³

Depicted in these verses is the state of deprivation of these disbelievers of the Hereafter: the journey is very exacting; yet they have no resources and provisions to take along. They have neither offered the prayer to the Almighty nor spent in His way even though these were the two deeds which were to be of use to them in this journey.

An ellipsis of the word بِالْحُسْنَى has occurred after صَدَقَ because of strong linguistic indications. In Sūrah Layl, this suppression is expressed thus:

فَأَمَّا مَنْ أَعْطَىٰ وَاتَّقَىٰ وَصَدَّقَ بِالْحُسْنَىٰ فَسَنُيَسِّرُهُ لِلْيُسْرَىٰ (٩٢: ٥-٧)

So, he who gave in the way of Allah and was God-fearing and attested to the good fate of the Hereafter, We shall make him traverse an easy path. (92:5-7)

23. Thus he neither testified nor prayed; on the contrary, he denied and turned away. Then he went away to his people conceitedly. Woe be to you! Yet again woe be to you! And again woe be to you! Yet again woe be to you!

It needs to be kept in consideration that spending in the way of God is very difficult for people who do not believe in the Hereafter and the good fate encountered there. This abyss can only be crossed by those whose hearts are satisfied that whatever they will spend shall be returned to them in the form of an eternal treasure in the Hereafter. It is this belief in the reward of the Hereafter which motivates a person to spend in the way of God. Those who deny it are never induced to such spending. In Sūrah Layl, the verses succeeding the ones quoted earlier portray this fact thus:

وَأَمَّا مَنْ بَخِلَ وَاسْتَغْنَىٰ وَكَذَّبَ بِالْحُسْنَىٰ فَسَنُيَسِّرُهُ لِلْعُسْرَىٰ (٩٢: ٨-١٠)

And he who showed miserliness and was indifferent and belied the good fate, We shall make him traverse an arduous path, (92: 8-10)

In the light of these verses, the meaning of فَلَا صَدَقَ will be that the person neither attested to the good fate of the Hereafter nor did he spend in the way of the Almighty. In other words, the meanings of both rejecting the Hereafter and stinginess are implied in this expression. After this, the words are: وَلَا صَلَّى (and he did not pray). In other words, the real motive for spending in the way of God and offering the prayer is belief in reward in the Hereafter. When this belief is non-existent in them, how can these deeds emanate from these people.

Here once again let us refresh what is so often expressed in this *tafsīr*: it is on prayer and spending in the way of God – the two primary deeds – that the *sharī'ah* is based. It is evident from this verse that both of these are themselves dependent upon belief in the Hereafter. People in whom this belief is not strong, will not be able to undertake them.

In the verse: وَلَكِنْ كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّى, the word كَذَّبَ occurs in contrast to صَدَقَ and the word تَوَلَّى occurs in contrast to صَلَّى. In other words, what was befitting for them was to testify to the Messenger and to the Hereafter and spend in the way of God and offer the prayer to Him; however, they belied the Hereafter and became indifferent.

The verse ثُمَّ دَهَبَ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ يَتَمَطَّى portrays this indifference and a little deliberation will show that the reason for this indifference has also been referred to in it: When people whose wealth and children have made them arrogant are reminded to fear God and the Hereafter, such reminders have no effect on them. They think that their affluence and abundance in family members is a sure sign of them being on the right path. For this reason, they do not entertain the reminders of people who try to point out their folly. Instead of being influenced by such reminders, they

conceitedly take a walk to their family vainly taking their prosperity and riches to be a clear sign of their correctness. Moreover, they go as far as to think that the real fault lies in people themselves bereft of prosperity yet are sounding such reminders and admonitions.

Here one should keep in mind what the Qur'ān mentions very frequently in various styles: the believers live amongst their family members continuously fearing the Almighty lest they are not able to properly care for the family and in this way earn God's wrath in any way. This sense of responsibility on the part of the believers is expressed thus in the Qur'ān: (٢٦:٥٢) قَالُوا إِنَّا كُنَّا قَبْلُ فِي أَهْلِنَا مُشْفِقِينَ (they will say: "we have always remained fearful in the matter of our family," (52:26)). Exactly opposite is the attitude of people whose hearts are devoid of God's fear. They regard their family to be a source of pride and conceit and as a clear sign of their good fortune. For this reason, they are in the state of inebriation mentioned in the anecdote of the companion of an orchard in Sūrah Kahaf in these words: (٣٥:١٨) مَا أَظُنُّ أَنْ تَبِيدَ هَذِهِ أَبَدًا (I don't reckon that this will ever perish! (18:35)). The mentality of such people is mentioned thus in Sūrah Muṭaffifin: وَإِذَا انْقَلَبُوا إِلَى أَهْلِهِمْ انْقَلَبُوا فَكِهِينَ (٣١: ٨١) (and when they would return to their people, they would return engrossed, (81:31)).

In the verses: أَوَّلَى لَكَ فَأَوَّلَى ثُمَّ أَوَّلَى لَكَ فَأَوَّلَى, the word أَوَّلَى is from ويل which is used for expressing anger, reproach, and hatred. In classical Arabic, this word is used abundantly. For example, Khansā' says:

هممت بنفسي كل الهموم
فأولى لنفسي أولى لها

(I made many intentions about my soul; what a pity on my soul; what a pity.)²⁴

Some Urdu translators have translated it as "befitting" which is against Arabic principles and also not in accordance with the context.

In the previous verses, the address was indirect. Here in these verses the address has become direct. This change in address is to express sorrow and hatred. I have alluded to this aspect at various places in this *tafsīr*.

أَيَحْسَبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنْ يُتْرَكَ سُدًى (٣٦) أَلَمْ يَكُ نُطْفَةً مِنْ مَنِيٍّ يُُمْنَى (٣٧) ثُمَّ كَانَ عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقَ فَسَوَّى (٣٨) فَجَعَلَ مِنْهُ الزَّوْجَيْنِ الذَّكَرَ وَالْأُنْثَى (٣٩) أَلَيْسَ ذَلِكَ بِقَادِرٍ عَلَى أَنْ

24. Al-Khansā', *Dīwān*, vol. 1, 102.

Here in these verses, the *sūrah* ends on the very subject with which it began. In the beginning it was said: *أَيَحْسَبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَلَّنْ نَجْمَعُ عِظَامَهُ بَلَىٰ قَادِرِينَ* (does man think that We will not be able to bring together his bones? Why not? We can put him together even his very finger-sections, (75: 3-4)). After that, the discourse had shifted to man's arrogance and his deliberate concealment of the truth and to the portrayal of the horrific events of the Day of Judgement. Now, here at the end, this question is raised again and answered: do people who express their doubt on being raised to life again after death think that man will be left unaccountable? If leaving him unaccountable is against the justice and wisdom of the Almighty, how will re-creating him again be difficult for the Almighty? Does he not reflect on the various stages of his creation. His creation begins with a drop of fluid being poured forth in the mother's womb. The passive tense in the word *يُمْنَى* points to a lack of attention and any elaborate arrangement. The person who pours it forth has nothing more to do with it after this act; he has no knowledge of what happens to it and what it undergoes. All later changes and developments in it are done by providence which, with remarkable creativity, makes it pass through various stages encompassed in layers of darkness. The drop of fluid becomes a clot of blood. Then it is brought into shape and later perfected. Finally, it emerges in the form of a man or a woman. In all these stages, it is providence which fashions and moulds it; no one else has any role in this. Therefore, man needs to realize that the God Whose signs of power, wisdom and creativity can be so abundantly seen in this way in a human being, is amply capable of recreating him once he dies.

With the grace of God, with these lines, I come to the end of this *sūrah's tafsīr*. *وله الحمد في الدنيا والآخرة* (gratitude be to Him in this world and in that to come)

Raḥmānābād,
19th January, 1979 AD
19th Safr, 1399 AH

25. Does man think that he will be left to go unchecked? Was he not a mere drop of sperm poured forth? Then he became a clot of blood and then God created him and then perfected him. Then made pairs of him: male and female. Is not that God able to raise the dead to life?